



Office of the State Fire Marshal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATE OFFICIALS URGE RESIDENTS TO FOLLOW PROPER COOKING SAFETY DURING THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Turkey Fryers: A Safety Concern as Cause of Fire Incidents

SPRINGFIELD – November 21, 2011. The Office of the State Fire Marshal reminds residents to exercise caution and use basic safety practices during cooking as Thanksgiving holiday approaches. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Thanksgiving continues to be the leading day for home cooking fires in U.S. each year.

Illinois ranked second only to Texas in the highest number of fires occurring on the Thanksgiving holiday, according to NFPA data from the past five years. One of the main causes of those fires points to the use of turkey deep fryers. While they are becoming a popular method for cooking the turkey, it continues to be a fire hazard if proper guidance is not followed.

Many fire departments have shown that the deep fryers tend to be top-heavy and have a risk of tipping over, overheating, or spilling hot oil which leads to fires and burns. When a frozen, cold or even wet turkey is submerged, bubbling hot oil spills over the pot's rim and onto the burner, causing an explosion.

"Thanksgiving should be a joyful time for Illinois families, but the threat of cooking-related fires is very real," said State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis. "Constant monitoring while cooking ought to be a priority as well as the proper use of turkey deep fryers."

The OSFM, in accordance with the U.S. Consumer Safety Commission, recommends consumers who prefer the method of turkey fryers to follow the following guidelines:

- Keep fryer in FULL VIEW while burner is on.
- Place fryer in an open area AWAY from all walls, fences, or other structures.
- Never use IN, ON, or UNDER a garage, breezeway, carport, porch, or any structure that can catch fire.
- Completely thaw (USDA says 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds) and dry turkey before cooking. Wet turkeys can produce excessive hot oil splatter when added to the oil.
- Raise and lower food SLOWLY to reduce splatter and avoid burns.
- COVER bare skin when adding or removing food.
- Check the oil temperature frequently.
- If oil begins to smoke, immediately turn gas supply OFF.

- If a fire occurs, immediately call 911. DO NOT attempt to extinguish fire with water. Take sure there is at least 2 feet of space between the liquid propane tank and fryer burner.
- Place the liquid propane gas tank and fryer so that any wind blows the heat of the fryer away from the gas tank.
- Center the pot over the burner on the cooker.

Other holiday cooking safety tips include:

- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. Do not leave cooking food unattended for a long period of time.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.

In case of a cooking fire, remember the following information:

- You have only a few moments to either put out a grease fire or escape.
- Grease fires can be smothered with baking soda, but unless the baking soda is easily accessible, it's usually easier to quickly find a lid.
- A dry chemical fire extinguisher will also work; keep in mind that it will contaminate your kitchen and food.
- Keep a non-glass lid nearby when cooking to smother small grease fires. Smother the fire by sliding the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave pan covered until it has cooled.
- If you try to fight the fire, be sure others are getting out and you have a clear way out.
- DO NOT PUT WATER ON A GREASE FIRE! Pouring water on burning grease or oil will not extinguish the fire. Burning oil will splash, spreading the grease fire over a larger area.
- Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number.
- If covering the fire doesn't work, get out as quickly as possible and close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.
- If clothes are caught on fire; STOP, DROP, and ROLL to extinguish them.
- Treat any burns only after the fire is contained or the building is completely evacuated. Call for paramedics for serious burns.

For more information about fire safety and prevention, please visit <http://www.sfm.illinois.gov>.